Advice to you, the student

Many students are interested in writing their term papers and degree projects in conjunction with companies or organisations. You get the opportunity to test your ability to make use of your theoretical knowledge in terms of real problems, which in turn can make you more attractive for the future labour market. Take the opportunity to do your essay / project in cooperation with an external partner!

Here are some practical points to think about relating to your degree project, term paper or work placement period. The term degree project will henceforth be used in this information sheet to describe all forms of external project work or work placement / internship. This advice relates to contacts with the company / organisation you are working with. In addition to this advice, you will receive information from your department and supervisor about how your work should be planned and carried out in practice.

Get started as early as possible

Think of your degree project as being divided up into three phases

1. planning phase
   – this phase actually starts before the essay writing course begins. This is when you need to consider what you are going to write about, and who you are going to do the project with. You also need to get in touch with external parties and finally set up a meeting without any preconceptions. This is also where you can get help from your teachers, other students in the region, co-operative outreach coordinators or other parties to see what sort of existing ideas and suggestions may be of use.

2. writing phase
   – this is the essay writing period proper. This is when the work is carried out, checks and balances made and the essay assessed for final grading.

3. evaluation phase
   – give feedback to the commissioner of the project. This can be done by submitting a copy of your report as well as offering thanks for the support and assistance you have received during the writing period or alternatively you could an oral presentation (or similar).

Do your homework

Make sure you have done your homework about the business or organisation you are going to be working with, reading up about them by visiting their website etc.

Ring first time round

Your first contact will almost certainly be via telephone with subsequent contacts via email to save time for both parties concerned. Avoid sending out emails on masse to multiple recipients. Direct your attentions instead to the individual business contact and specifically relate the contents of the email to the receiver's business. Explain why you are the person to do a good job for them. Always provide contact information as well as an email address and telephone number.

You are not just representing yourself

Remember that when you are out and about in connection with study-related work you are acting as an ambassador for your educational institution and above all the degree course / subject you are studying. Doing a good piece of work means that the image of the student will be enhanced positively. If you don't do good work there is a risk that it will be more difficult for other students to set up projects there in the future.

Start with a meeting without any preconditions

The first meeting between the student and the company / organisation should be without any preconceptions. Both parties can subsequently change their minds if anything feels amiss. Make sure you turn up at the appointed time, confirming the time of the meeting a few days beforehand in order to avoid any possible misunderstanding. Provide information to your contact in the business / organisation about the degree project - there is specific information from the university aimed at companies / organisations (the equivalent of this document).

Discuss expectations

During the meeting there are a number of questions which need to be answered in order to ensure that the work will progress as smoothly as possible.

1. time and reference frames
   Give an outline of the time frames in operation from the university as well as providing contact information to supervisors / subject convenor at the university.

2. format
   Will the essay be a study of a specific business operation or will it be a comparative study? If the study is directed towards a specific organisation - will there be regular opportunities for updates and progress reviews? Do you need to be physically present at the workplace during the course of the work? Or will you just collect material and report back?
when the essay has been completed? Depending on what path you choose, you will have a number of differing degrees of contact open to you. Agree on the extent of your contacts. As a student you will need an appointed person acting as a contact in the organisation.

3. feedback and reviews
   If you choose to have regular reviews and feedback sessions, you need to decide on how these will be organized. Via physical meetings (book rooms in such a case with dates right away; it is easier to cancel than find new times available), via telephone or email? How frequent should these take place?

4. public access to information
   – the university is a public authority and so the completed essay will be considered to be in the public domain which anyone can obtain, download etc. If a company / organisation allows you to access company confidential information you will obviously have to ensure preservation of this confidentiality. It is therefore important right from the beginning to discuss if there are any aspects which should not be omitted in the final essay draft. How much should be concealed etc? It might be necessary to write two examples of the essay, one of which is handed in to the higher education institution and the other submitted to the company / organisation involved. If this is the case it might be a good idea to ensure that the contents and extent of the protected information are documented in writing in order to avoid possible misunderstandings with the company / organisation.

5. ownership of results – copyright and intellectual property rights
   As a student you own the results of your work unless otherwise agreed. If the work involved is concerned with product development and design for example and you have the intention of creating new commercial products, it can be particularly important that you and the company are in agreement concerning the legal rights to the results of your work. If necessary, the university can help with the drawing up of the agreement.

6. additional costs
   It should not cost the student anything to complete the project. Costs incurred in connection with the project should be borne by the company / organisation in question. This should be agreed upon in advance! With regards to travelling / visits in connection with project work (not work placements) it is possible to rent a car free of charge. For Växjö at present this relates to travelling within Kronoberg County and for Kalmar travelling within Kalmar County. In the long term these rules will be amended.

7. report reading?
   Does your contact person in the company / organisation want to read the report before you submit it in order to avoid any potential misunderstandings? The company cannot however influence your result / analysis in any way.

8. presentation
   When the essay is ready it is important to provide opportunities for feedback / review and also to consider whether the project should be presented orally or not. If the project is to be presented orally, it is also important to consider for whom and in what format the presentation should be given.

Before giving feedback
   If you are going to have a feedback meeting and you need help with anything or just want a quick word, it is a good idea to send an email beforehand so that the contact person has the opportunity to prepare themselves (which saves time).

Feedback / review
   It is important to provide feedback regardless of whether you are doing a comparative study and have relatively little contact with each individual business / organisation or if you are studying only one company or organisation. Thank the people concerned for giving up their time and the very least you can do is provide them with a copy of your report so that they can see how you have used the material you have gathered. If you are going to do a presentation of your project for the company / organisation you have been active in, consider focusing on the parts which are of the greatest interest for the company / organisation (the more involved methodological and theory discussions can be read in your essay by those having a special interest in this direction).

Providing contact details
   Provide contact details (which are important when you have completed your studies) so that the company / organisation can contact you if they need to, for example if they want to give feedback and provide information about any benefits / effects of the results you have obtained).

   If you have done a good piece of work which has been appreciated, don't hesitate to ask your contact person to act as a reference!

In case of problems
   Turn in the first instance to your supervisor. You can also talk to the person in charge of your course or the director of the degree programme.

Good luck!